

Building a Better World

***The Difference Engine: Charles Babbage and the Quest to Build the First Computer* by Doron Swade** B Babbage

In 1821 an inventor and mathematician, Charles Babbage, was poring over a set of mathematical tables. Finding error after error, he exclaimed, "I wish to God these calculations had been executed by steam." Babbage launched himself on a venture to design mechanical calculating engines, which led to the entirely new realm of computing.

The Promise: How One Woman Made Good on Her Extraordinary Pact to Send a Classroom of 1st Graders to College by Oral Lee Brown B Brown

In 1987, Brown went to an elementary school to find a little girl she wanted to help and ended up promising an entire first-grade class that she would pay their college tuition. (Library Journal) Spoiler alert: she did ... and that was just the beginning.

***A Short History of Nearly Everything* by Bill Bryson** 500 Bryson

Bill Bryson takes his ultimate journey – into the most intriguing and consequential questions that science has to answer. He undertakes a sometimes profound, sometimes funny, and always supremely clear and entertaining adventure in the realms of human knowledge.

***Self-help Messiah: Dale Carnegie and Success in Modern America* by Steven Watts** B Carnegie

Before Oprah Winfrey, there was Dale Carnegie. His book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, became a best-seller worldwide, and Life magazine named him one of the most important Americans of the 20th century. Carnegie was born in rural Missouri and to make ends meet he tried his hands at various sales jobs. What he discovered was as simple as it was profound: understanding people's needs and desires is paramount in any successful enterprise.

***Tasting Freedom: Octavius Catto and the Battle for Equality in Civil War America* by Daniel R Biddle** B Catto

Murray Dubin and Pulitzer Prize winner Dan Biddle chronicle the life of this charismatic leader, a “free” black man whose freedom was in name only. Born in the American south, where slavery permeated everyday life, he moved north where he joined the fight to be truly free – free to vote, ride on streetcars, play baseball and even participate in July 4th celebrations.

***W. E. B. DuBois: The Fight for Equality* by David L. Lewis** B DuBois

This monumental biography treats the early and middle phases of a long and intense career: a crucial 50-year period that demonstrates how Du Bois changed forever the way Americans think about themselves.

***You Belong to the Universe: Buckminster Fuller and the Future* by Jonathan Keats** B Fuller

The creations of inventor Buckminster Fuller often bordered on science fiction: the geodesic dome, the three-wheeled car, a bathroom requiring no plumbing. Despite his brilliant mind and life-long devotion to serving mankind, Fuller's ideas were often dismissed. This book documents his six-decade quest to "make the world work for 100% of humanity."

***Yamasaki in Detroit: A Search for Serenity* by John Gallagher** 720.92 Gallagher

Although his best-known project was the World Trade Center, architect Minoru Yamasaki (1912-1986) worked to create moments of surprise, serenity, and delight in distinctive buildings around the world. In his adopted home of Detroit, Yamasaki produced many important designs, ranging from public buildings to offices and private residences.

***Building Art: The Life and Work of Frank Gehry* by Paul Goldberger** B Gehry

At once a sweeping view of a great architect and an intimate look at creative genius, Building Art is in many ways the saga of the architectural milieu of the twenty-first century. But most of all it is the compelling story of the man who first comes to mind when we think of the lasting possibilities of buildings as art.

***Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports from My Life with Autism* by Temple Grandin** B Grandin

Temple Grandin, Ph.D., is a gifted animal scientist who has designed one third of all the livestock-handling facilities in the United States. She also lectures widely on autism – because Temple Grandin is autistic, a woman who thinks, feels, and experiences the world in ways that are incomprehensible to the rest of us.

***Josef Albers: To Open Eyes* by Frederick A. Horowitz** O 709.2 Horowitz

As a thinker, writer, and educator, Josef Albers directly and indirectly influenced generations of established artists. This book provides not only a compelling study of a key figure of 20th century art, but also ponders what constitutes art and how it is made.

Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson

B Jobs

Walter Isaacson has written a riveting story of the roller-coaster life and searingly intense personality of a creative entrepreneur whose passion for perfection and ferocious drive revolutionized six industries: personal computers, animated movies, music, phones, tablet computing, and digital publishing.

***This Child Will Be Great: Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa's First Woman President* by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

B Johnson Sirleaf

From Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf – Africa's first elected female president – comes an inspirational memoir about her improbable rise to international prominence, her fight for political freedom, and her unwavering determination to rebuild Liberia in the wake of civil war.

***King: A Biography* by David L. Lewis**

B King

Acclaimed by leading historians and critics when it appeared shortly after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., this foundational biography wends through the corridors in which King held court, posing the right questions and providing a keen measure of the man whose career and mission enthrall scholars and general readers to this day.

***Alden B. Dow: Midwestern Modern* by Diane Maddex**

O 720.924 Maddex

A Midwesterner by birth, Dow left a legacy national in nature. Active from the early 1930s through the late 1970s, he designed some 600 projects – often daringly modern. Dow changed the face of his hometown of Midland, Michigan, leaving it more than 100 houses, offices, and plants for The Dow Chemical Company, churches, banks, schools, and recreational structures. (And your library! ☺)

***Louis Braille: A Touch of Genius* by C. Michael Mellor**

686.2 Mellor

Braille's life in the middle of the 19th century provides a rich narrative: a man who, blinded during boyhood, devoted himself to teaching other blind people better ways of negotiating their world. In addition to devising the raised-dot alphabet, Braille also set up a system for musical notation and built printing machines for his alphabets. (Pub. Weekly)

***The Priority List: A Teacher's Final Quest to Discover Life's Greatest Lessons* by David Menasche** **B Menasche**

In this poignant and inspiring memoir, a beloved high school English teacher with a terminal illness undertakes a cross-country journey to reunite with his former students in order to find out if he made a difference in their lives, discovering along the way what is truly important in life.

***The Protest Singer: An Intimate Portrait of Pete Seeger* by Alec Wilkinson**

B Seeger

Pete Seeger, with his musical grace and inextinguishable passion for social justice, transformed folk singing into a high form of peaceful protest in the second half of the 20th century. Wilkinson lets us experience the man's unique blend of independence and commitment, charm, courage, energy, and belief in human equality and American democracy.

***God's Hotel: A Doctor, a Hospital, and a Pilgrimage to the Heart of Medicine* by Victoria Sweet** **B Sweet**

Choosing to serve in the last remaining almshouse in America, and tracing our understanding of medicine back to its medieval roots, a physician uncovers lost lessons in the care of body and soul.

***Harriet Tubman: Imagining a Life* by Beverly Lowry**

B Tubman

In *Harriet Tubman: Imagining a Life*, Beverly Lowry goes beyond the familiar tales to create a portrait of Tubman in lively imagined vignettes that, as Lowry writes, "catch her on the fly" and portray her life as she herself might have presented it.

***The Imitation Game: Alan Turing Decoded* by Jim Ottaviani**

Graphic Novel B Turing

New York Times bestselling author Jim Ottaviani and Eisner-nominated artist Leland Purvis present a factually-detailed account of Turing's life and groundbreaking research: as an unconventional genius who was tried, convicted, and punished for being openly gay, and whose work still fuels the computing and communication systems that define our modern world.

***Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* by Paula Giddings** **B Wells**

Ida B. Wells, born to slaves in Mississippi, began her activist career by refusing to leave a first-class ladies' car on a Memphis railway and rose to lead the nation's first campaign against lynching. In this eagerly-awaited biography, her irrepressible personality surges out of the pages.

***Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* by Manning Marable**

B X

Of the great figures in 20th-century American history perhaps none is more complex and controversial than Malcolm X. Through his tireless work he empowered thousands of black Americans to create better lives and stronger communities. In death he became a broad symbol of both resistance and reconciliation for millions around the world.